

Texas churches see revival, community sees awakening

By Carolyn Cunningham

West Conroe, TEXAS (BP)--About 600 individuals made spiritual decisions during the Montgomery County GO TELL Crusade in Conroe, Texas, led by evangelist Rick Gage. More than 10,000 persons total attended the four evening services, Sept. 18-21, at the Buddy Moorhead Memorial Stadium. Of the 600 who made commitments, about half made professions of faith in Christ and the others repented as the first step for spiritual renewal.

Crusade team members also spoke to students in 11 public and private schools, presenting a positive message to discourage drug and alcohol use among teens. The Outcast BMX freestyle stunt team performed daring acts of balance, control and jumps at the schools, and they also highlighted the crusade's youth rally prior to the final evening service.

Future Hall of Fame pitcher Andy Pettitte gave a testimonial Monday night.

Receiving Jesus as his Savior at the age of 11, Pettitte recalled that day as "the greatest day in my life – greater than the day I got married; greater than the day my children were born; greater than the times that we won those five World Series. The reason is that on that day my life was changed."

Pettitte also recalled how God used difficult times in his career to keep his focus on Him. In spite of his pitching talent, he remained four years in the minor leagues – the last half of that time with a wife and a child to support on a monthly salary of \$700. "My wife's sleeping on an air mattress -- while I'm in the minor leagues -- following the team bus around in a pickup truck."

But he sees now God's plan in allowing those difficult times.

Pettitte said God "delayed my jump to the big leagues" to mold and shape him and his wife "into the kind of people He wanted us to be. He got me to the big leagues in His perfect timing."

On Tuesday, Miss Texas USA 2012 Brittany Booker shared her testimony, and former Southern Baptist Convention President James Merritt presented the evening's message.

Booker won her first pageant earlier this year to become Miss Houston 2011. A graduate of Bay Area Christian School, she is a student at the University of Houston, where she volunteers some of her spare time at Hope Village, a residency program for adults with special needs. Receiving Jesus at an early age, Booker said she was hesitant about participating in pageants. "There are a lot of stereotypes about 'pageant girls.' People think they're all beauty and no brains or that they're fake, stuck up or superficial.

"But when I got involved, I definitely learned differently. There are so many amazing girls; so many strong Christian women; so many sisters in Christ who are just there to promote their charitable platforms and speak about the Lord.

"I've had so many opportunities to support my platform, which is special needs, and to share the word of Christ with so many different people that I wouldn't have ever come into contact with had I not won Miss Houston.

"I was even more shocked when I won Miss Texas USA – my very first try. God has so blessed me abundantly.

"When the Lord's involved, anything can happen. He is in control. So don't worry. Just follow in His calling and He will take care of you," Booker concluded.



James Merritt, senior pastor of Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Georgia, focused on the need to be “born again.”



Sharing from Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, he said, “I’m going to put it in 21st century terminology.”

“Nick, you don’t have to be a member of a church. You don’t have to be baptized. You don’t have to be religious. You don’t have to do good works. You don’t have to give money to the poor. But, Nick, if you want to go to Heaven, if you want to enter the Kingdom of God, you must be born again.”

“Nicodemus replied, ‘I know who You are. You’re a great teacher who has come from God.’ But Jesus did not let Nicodemus distract him from His original point,” Merritt said. “Nick, you don’t understand. It has nothing to do with doing. It has everything to do with becoming and being.

“For the first time in Nicodemus’ life,” Merritt said, “he was confronted with this shattering thought: Good isn’t good enough.”

Merritt applied the lesson to the crusade crowd. “It doesn’t matter if Billy Graham was your father and Joan of Arc was your mother. Ladies and gentlemen, God only has children; He doesn’t have grandchildren.

“Jesus was saying to Nicodemus and He’s saying to us, ‘Whether you go to Heaven or not has nothing to do with your physical birth. It has everything to do with your spiritual birth.’

“Being born again is not making a new start in life; it’s receiving a new life to start with. Going to Heaven has absolutely nothing to do with what you do for God. Nothing. It has everything to do with what God does through you and what God has done for you through the cross of Jesus Christ,” Merritt urged.

During the concluding Wednesday night service, John Bisagno, legendary former pastor of the First Baptist Church of Houston, was a guest in the audience. Bisagno called GO TELL evangelist Rick Gage “a mixture of Freddie Gage [Gage’s father also was a nationally known evangelist] and Billy Graham,” adding it was the first time in a long time he had heard a message preached to the lost.

Gage, who presented a Gospel message Sunday, Monday and Wednesday evenings, closed the crusade with the same emphasis with which he started it.

“Thank God for the shed blood of Jesus,” Gage said. “Thank God for His redeeming power. Thank God He is the God of the second chance. Thank God He is the God of salvation. Thank God He wants to bring victory and freedom into your heart.”

During the altar call, about 700 persons of the 4,500 in the stands gathered on the field to ask for prayer or decision counseling. Gage emphasized that the altar call is only the beginning for them. “We want to help them get



plugged into a Bible-believing church and help them begin their spiritual growth process,” he said.

Churches who joined the crusade effort pledged to follow up with each person who came forward for counseling and to engage them right away in a program of discipleship.

The crusade was the answer to months of prayers by six pastors of different denominations, gathering as friends to ask God to bring revival among the churches and awakening among the public in Montgomery County, Texas. Other pastors joined this original group; and by the launch of events, 47 area congregations, including Assembly of God, Church of Christ, Lutheran, Methodist, non-denominational, Presbyterian and Southern Baptist, had joined together for this large-scale ministry and outreach to the community.

The core group of six pastors included Jay Gross of West Conroe Baptist Church, Mark Denison of the First Baptist Church of Conroe, Lloyd Maddoux of Conroe First Assembly of God, Kjell Johansson of Living Branch Church in Conroe, Steve Yates of Conroe Church of Christ and Wes Pratt of Northside Baptist Church.

Gross, who was crusade chairman, summed up the crusade less in terms of its immediate affects and more in terms of its enduring impact.

“The crusade brought the Gospel of Christ to the forefront of the county’s attention, created an unprecedented unity among churches across a diverse denominational spectrum and made tremendous inroads into area schools through a powerful assembly program,” he said.

“Now in the follow-up phase, the Montgomery County GO TELL Crusade is proving to be a spiritual harvest that will continue to bear fruit in the months to follow.”

For more information about GO TELL Ministries of area crusades, youth camps and international missions, please visit www.gotellministries.com.